Spring flooding: Worst may be over

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — The worst of this spring's flooding in Utah is over, the National Weather Service says.

Meanwhile, U.S. Forest Service officials inspected the area around Trial Lake, where an earthen dike failed early Saturday.

A second day of cooler weather, punctuated with spotty precipitation, resulted in reduced flows in northern Utah streams and rivers that had topped their banks last week when the snowmelt reached its peak, weather service meteorologist William Alder and hydrologist Gerald Williams said Monday.

Warmer weather by the weekend will allow flows to increase again, but not to the levels that existed during the first portion of June, they said, adding that the seven creeks flowing into the Salt Lake Valley have peaked.

They estimated 60 percent to 80 percent of the abundant upper-elevation snowpack has melted. The remaining snowmelt could revive minor flooding in trouble spots along the Logan, Bear, upper Weber and upper Provo rivers, but not like that experienced recently.

The Logan River was down about 4 inches Monday. The Bear River was still flooding farmland in Rich County but also appears to have peaked. Lower flows in the Weber River have curtailed most problems around Oakley and Kamas in Summit County, while Wasatch County creeks also were down, although water was still being funneled down the northbound lane of Main Street in Heber, county officials said.

In the Uinta Mountains, Forest Service officials surveyed the damage to highways and campgrounds after a saturated dike below Trial Lake gave way about 2 a.m. Saturday. Preparations were being made to start repair work, said Dan Symmes, forester for the Kamas District of the Wasatch-Cache National Forest.

"Everything isn't back to normal completely, but there are no worries of further threats," he said. "Teams have looked things over to make sure public safety is in order."

Symmes said road crews would begin efforts shortly after dawn to restore access to Trial Lake via Utah 150, which was made impassable when water released by the dike failure tore gaping holes in sections of the road. Crews also will redirect the Provo River, which left its banks after receiving the sudden surge of water, under a bridge that wasn't damaged Saturday.

The forester said the Trial Lake water master estimated 700 acre-feet of water "exploded out of there all at once" when the levee gave way. An acre-foot is the amount of water needed to cover an acre of ground with one foot of water.

Alder said the release of that water caused noticeable jumps in downstream flows of the Provo River.

At Woodland, for example, the river jumped from 2,150 cubic feet per second to 3,150 cfs, then returned to the earlier flow two hours later. Above Deer Creek Reservoir, the river climbed from 2,450 cfs to 3,750 in a four-hour period before returning to 2,400 cfs about 3 a.m.

Trial Lake was about 65 percent full when the dike broke, causing about a 20 percent drop.

He said speculation for the failure still centers on saturated soils undermining the structure, which was built in the early 1900s.

The Daily Herald

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Jim Hills photo

UDOT workers take a break Sunday from cleaning up the edges of washed-out SR 150 as the Provo River continues to flow.

rial Lake dam fails

Officials assess flood damage

Dan Symms, U.S. Forest Service, photo

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By PATRICK CHRISTIAN
Herald Staff Writer

Authorities this morning were still trying to assess the damage left in the wake of a wall of water rushed down the upper Provo River when a section of the Trial Lake earthen dike failed in Summit County this past weekend.

Early reports indicated damage in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, but authorities said they believe the immediate danger is over even though most of the water remains in the lake.

Trial Lake is the source of the Provo River. A torrent of water water was channeled down that waterway Friday around midnight ripping through at least five sections of State Road 150 and raging through four campgrounds, stranding some campers, who all managed to escape without injury.

Early Saturday morning, rescuers rushed to the campgrounds located in the Wasatch-Cache National Forest to help stranded campers.

While the amount of water that escaped from Trial Lake was enough do considerable damage just below the dam, authorities said it's had minimal effect on levels in the Provo River or Deer Creek Resevoir in Wasatch County. Harold Ford the chief operator at Deer Creek Reservoir said, "It hasn't affected us at all. It was not enough (water) to bother anything at all."

Other authorities said the majority of the water in Trial Lake is still there. Those downstream of the affected campgrounds were evacuated and are not in danger, they said.

"There's a lot of people up here this morning from different agencies forming a damage-assessment team," said Dan Symms, a recreation specialist with the Wasatch-Cache National Forest. He said he was the first U.S. Forest Service official to arrive at the scene.

(See LAKE, Page 3)

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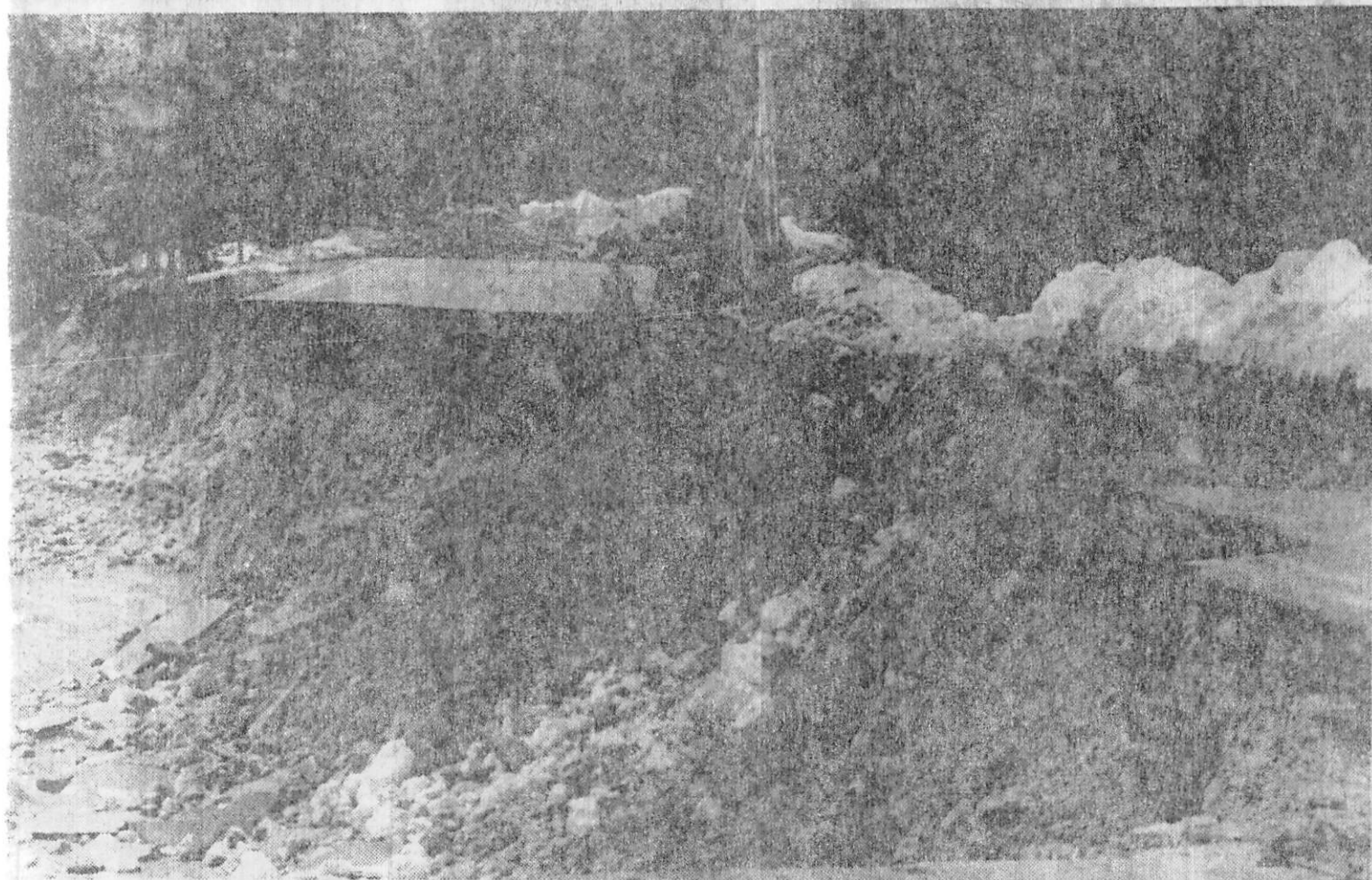
Jim Hills photo

DOT workers take a break Sunday from cleaning up the edges of washed-out SR 150 as the Provo River continues to flow.

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(See LAKE, Page 3)

U.S. Forest Service puts price tag on flooding from Trial Lake dam

The price tag for damage from the failure last week of a dike at Trial Lake will be close to $670,000, according to Dan Symmes, recreation forester for the U.S. Forest Service Kamas District.

Symmes says the estimate includes $390,000 for damage done to natural resources and $280,000 for damage done to roads and bridges. He said the estimates don't include administrative costs. A wall of water was released when an earthen dike failed sending the cascade down the upper section of the Provo River early June 7. The sudden rush of water ripped out sections of SR 150 and did damage to several bridges.

Symmes said the river went well over its banks and stayed outside the normal channel doing considerable damage to campgrounds and fisheries in the upper section of the river. "Fish were literally flushed out of the system." said Symmes. "It will take years to recover."

The Forest Service spokesman said access to the Murdock Basin bridge was damaged and at least $100,000 will be needed to restore the bridge to Murdock Basin.

Symmes said the present plan for reopening the road calls for access from the Wyoming side to a locked gate somewhere between east of Trial Lake. Access from the Kamas side will be open to a locked gate somewhere above Cobblerest Campground. Symmes said there is no target date yet for opening the damaged portions of the highway.

Other lakes and reservoirs in the area of Trial Lake have been inspected and are considered safe, according to Symmes. He said inspectors are making daily helicopter flights over the area to watch for any problems. Symmes said Clear Lake did "overtop" last week but that there was no danger of an event similar to the Trial Lake failure.

Debris forced the water around this bridge on SR 150 but the torrent ripped out the road.

Wasatch County gets money for Provo River water analysis

By SONNI SCHWINN
Wasatch County Correspondent

HEBER CITY — Wasatch County will receive $45,951 from the state, according to County Planner Bob Mathis.

The money is to be appropriated from the Central Utah Water Conservancy District and the Metropolitan Water District, under the 1988 Water Quality Analysis and Reporting Contract the commission approved last week.

The money will be used to report and analyze water quality statistics on the Provo River and oversee the county water quality plan which was adopted in 1984, he explained.

The main objective, outlined in the contract, is to interpret water quality data, furnished by the state, he said. "We will review the monitoring program, suggest changes, attend meetings, polish the annual report, develop and participate in the Heber Valley Ground Water evaluation, make field inspections of construction activities (Jordanelle, Deer Valley, Provo Canyon).

"We have made a great deal of progress cleaning up water quality in Heber Valley," he said. "We are working hard with the contractors on the Jordanelle (dam) and on (relocated U.S. 40) to keep their work in line as well."

"Dairies are some of the major contributors to surface water pollution and they are also one of the most cost-effective to clean up," he said.

As an example, he cited the experience of the Rural Clean Water Project at Snake Creek, which received national recognition by the Environmental Protection Agency. Farmers, the Department of Agriculture, Mountainlands Association of Governments and Wasatch County cooperated in installing pollution control procedures on farms. Although public funds were used, those farmers added thousands of their own dollars, as have others in the county, to help clean up surface water, he said.

Page 12 — THE HERALD, Provo, Utah, Friday, February 13, 1987

Provo water official seeks rehabilitation of high lakes, river

By JOSEPHINE ZIMMERMAN
Herald Staff Writer

Rehabilitation of upper lakes on the Provo River is needed now and cannot wait until Jordanelle Dam is constructed, Stanley Roberts, Provo River Water Commissioner, told the Central Utah Water Conservancy District board Thursday.

Roberts asked the board to recommend that the Bureau of Reclamation step up its lake rehabilitation project.

He estimated it will cost $1.5 million in federal funds which are non-reimbursable.

Roberts said the Central Utah Project includes work on the 15 lakes on the Upper Provo River, and this work is of concern to Wasatch County, the Forest Service, Utah County and Provo City.

He said he represents six permit holders of storage rights in the upper lakes. Provo City owns water in Lost Lake, which is presently usable. Wasatch Irrigation Company has ownership of water in several lakes. Extension Irrigation Company and Timpanogos Irrigation Company have rights, but the major part of storage rights in the lakes is with Provo Reservoir Company which serves Utah and Salt Lake County interests.

He said five lakes have been reached or suspended because of Forest Service action.

"The owners of rights feel an urgency to have the rehabilitation work done," he declared.

He pointed out that Trial Lake dike failed last June and caused a sedimentation problem through the Provo River.

Trial Lake was to be used as a fluctuating reservoir to meet the needs of the Kamas and Francis areas under the CUP.

Construction of Jordanelle Dam will solve one of the storage problems, but its completion is several years down the road, he said.

"The critical one is Trial Lake."

After hearing Roberts' presentation, the board voted unanimously to have the staff study the matter and make a recommendation.

Opinions

Herald comments

We all have a stake in Provo River's fish

Those who own shares of the water in Provo River have reduced the flow this month so there will be more storage in Deer Creek Reservoir for summer use.

Water users are nervous about the light snowpack.

A look at the mountains should explain why they are getting giddy.

For the same reason, there is understandable concern among fishermen that one of the state's most prized river fisheries could be in danger.

It doesn't take an Einstein to figure the problem out: fish need water, lots of it.

Last week, the release out of Deer Creek Reservoir was 100 cubic feet per second, with 40 going into the green aquaduct pipe to Salt Lake City and 60 going down the river. At one point, the water users were talking about knocking that amount down to 40 cfs.

Any reduction in the total 100 cfs figure from Deer Creek will result in a loss of fish habitat and will kill fish, according to Charles Thompson, chief fisheries biologist for the Department of Wildlife Resources in this region.

The important thing is both the Provo Water Users Association and the DWR are monitoring the situation and will hopefully allow water concessions when the water saving maneuver reaches a critical point.

The situation is worth watching very carefully. Fishermen are especially wary.

The Provo River, at one time, was considered one of the finest fisheries in the world. There have been many world record trophy fish brought out of the Provo. Some of those records still stand today.

Severe flooding and subsequent scouring of the bed coupled with low water flows wreaked havoc on the river's aquatic life.

More than a dozen years ago the state decided to restrict fishing on the Provo River to help maintain its valuable fishery.

The state quit planting the river and imposed special restrictions on fishermen. Slowly and delicately the river has struggled to regain some of its prowess and it is currently at Blue Ribbon Class status, one of the best fisheries in the Rocky Mountains.

The Provo Water Users Association say it recognizes the seriousness of the fishery situation and will be mindful of minimum water flows.

Rick Cox, assistant superintendent for the PRWUA, says the group has no intention of damaging the fisheries.

Any disruption in the operation of the Provo River can quickly undo the long-term progress so the water users are to be commended for their concern.

The problem is so critical, however the DWR should continue to closely scrutinize the efforts of the water users and they should independently monitor the flows carefully.

We should all be concerned about the status and dignity of the Provo River.

It's in our backyard.

The Uinta Visitor Information Association Seeks Volunteers

4-6-88

upper Provo

If you care about our natural resources, the Uinta Visitor Information Association (UVIA) needs you.

The UVIA is a non-profit volunteer organization whose purpose is to provide greater service to forest visitors. The organization is composed of people who care about the natural resources of the Uinta National Forest. Service to the public given by UVIA includes selling and publishing outdoor nature books, hiking guides or maps, historical interpretation, signing nature trails, or building forest trails. The Uinta National Forest provides office space at its headquarters in Provo and at the Strawberry Visitor Center near Strawberry Reservoir.

The UVIA is searching for you, the dedicated person who cares about the future of our forests and its resources. It's a new organization, so there is a lot of opportunity for new ideas and projects. If you enjoy the outdoors and wish to enjoy it in the future, then this organization is for you.

If you wish to become a member, please call Laure at the Heber Ranger District, 654-0470, or write to the District Ranger, P.O. Box 190, Heber City, UT 84032.

Reduced Provo River flows under scrutiny this week

10-18-88

By PATRICK CHRISTIAN
Herald Staff Writer

The Provo River began to inch down today below the 100 cubic feet per second level required by law.

The illegally low levels are a result of a request by Dee C. Hansen, director of the Utah Department of Natural Resources, and are part of a test to determine the impact of reduced flows on fish habitat.

The 100 cfs minimum flow was first recommended officially by the Environmental Impact Statement of the Bonneville Unit of the Central Utah Project. It calls for a minimum 100 cfs flow only from Deer Creek Dam to the Olmstead Diversion Dam located between Bridal Veil Falls and Vivian Park.

Minimum flows are required by the terms of the Strawberry-Deer Creek Water Exchange, and the National Environmental Policy Act document.

The 100 cfs minimum flow is based on a scientific river study made in 1978 and 1979. A second study was later done, confirming 100 cfs is a good river level to protect Provo River fisheries.

Now, yet another study has been commissioned; this time by Hansen.

Last winter, outraged anglers and environmentalists successfully blocked an attempt by the Provo River Water User's Association to activate devices it operates at Deer Creek Dam that would have resulted in flows that violate the 100 cfs minimum. Water users wanted to save water in Deer Creek for this year's expected dry summer.

In Hansen's test, the flow

(See RIVER, Page 2)

10-18-88

RIVER:

(Continued from Page 1)

will be lowered in 10-cfs increments from 100 cfs to 60 cfs, said Charlie Thompson, a regional fisheries manager for the Division of Wildlife Resources based in Springville.

He said as the river drops, workers will monitor the effect on trout fisheries.

Researchers will examine exposed sand bars, insect breeding grounds and other river features, said DWR spokesman Barry Wirth.

The test will end on Friday, and Hansen has directed the Division of Wildlife Resources to complete a report on the testing by Dec. 1.

Thompson called Provo River fishing the best stream fishing in Utah and the best stream brown trout fishing in the nation. He said it's critical to maintain flows to protect this prime fishery. Thompson said new national regulations recognize recreation like fishing and river running as beneficial uses of a river.

Dr. Fred Reimherr, Salt Lake City psychiatrist and a member of the Stonefly Society, an angler association interested in protecting the Provo River's recreational potential, said he trusts the Division of Wildlife Resources to conduct a fair test. He said he would not trust the test if done by the Provo River Water Users Association or the Salt Lake Metropolitan Water District that uses much of the stored Deer Creek water reserves.

But he said planning for the test has been rushed, and he doubts the study has been thought out well enough to gather the best data.

Mirror Lake Road closed to motorists for the winter

11-16-88

United Press International

With a blanket of snow on the northern Utah mountains, the state Transportation Department has closed the Mirror Lake Road for the winter season.

Department spokeswoman Shirley Iverson says State Road 150, through the western end of the Uinta Mountains, has been posted closed from 14 miles east of Kamas to the Bear River Service Station near the Utah-Wyoming state line.

"All maintenance work on (state road) 150 is discontinued until next spring," Iverson said. "Closed roads are neither plowed nor patrolled, and motorists who proceed past the closure signs do so at their own risk."

The Mirror Lake Road is the fourth Utah mountain recreational highway posted closed for the 1988-89 winter season. The others are U-35 over Wolf Creek Pass, U-135 over Guardsman's Pass, and U-224 from Park City to Midway.

Roads into the mountain recreation areas are closed during the winter, Iverson said, "because declining traffic volumes do not warrant snow removal and maintenance."